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ABSTRACT

The professional and personal biases of an evaluation team at Cornell University were found to interfere with the assessment of an interdisciplinary, team taught, problem oriented curriculum in International Studies. An account was given of the hiring of the evaluators, evaluator role ambiguity, evaluator professional clashes, facilitation of group compromise, evaluation tasks, and models for evaluation. The personal growth that occurred between the evaluators as they learned together and practiced self-scrutiny was emphasized. Evaluation was viewed as having a disciplinary, intellectual, interpersonal, and professional impact on the evaluators. (BJG)

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SYMPOSIUM ON:

SOME IMPACTS OF THE EVALUATION OF AN EXPERIMENTAL INTERNATIONAL STUDIES CURRICULUM ON THE MEMBERS OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY EVALUATION TEAM.

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The purpose of this symposium is to open up for discussion a somewhat neglected area of professional practice. As evaluators, we work in the real world and must cope with high levels of uncertainty, ambiguity, and complexity. Recently, these problems have become more acute in situations where we shift roles, become less the non-participant observer and more the program consultant and participant. Under these new conditions, we need to develop procedures to maintain appropriate levels of professional and ethical consistency. One such procedure is self scrutiny, the monitoring of our own reactions and learnings as outcomes of the evaluation programs we design and implement. That is the topic of the present symposium.

Background

The importance of self scrutiny was particularly salient in an evaluation study that was done recently by the Center for Improvement of Undergraduate Education at Cornell University. As a group, we were responsible for assessing an interdisciplinary, team taught, problem oriented curriculum in International Studies. Because the program was interdisciplinary, complex, and changed markedly over time, each member of the evaluation team was required to play a variety of roles within the evaluation design. The result was that, more often than is usually the case, we quickly became sensitized to some of the different types of impacts that our work was having on us as professionals

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and individuals.

Briefly, interest in this evaluation began when the Center for International Studies organized an experimental undergraduate program. This program was an innovative effort by CIS to make available to undergraduate students the rich, interdisciplinary resources in International Studies that were available at Cornell, and at the same time, to test the benefits and limitations of conventional introductory course teaching techniques in an interdisciplinary, team teaching environment. The University accepted the initial proposal of six different courses to be offered over a three-year period and also required that the program be assessed in some systematic fashion.

Initially, this assessment was internal -- a subjective review of the first course by the team who taught that offering. This procedure was not completely satisfactory to CIS and they negotiated a more formal evaluation with Stephen Brock who was then the Associate Director of the Center for Improvement of Undergraduate Education. Brock, an educational ~~educational~~ philosopher and administrator coordinated the evaluation of the next two courses. This effort used items from the Cornell Inventory for Student Appraisal of Teaching and Courses to measure student perceptions at the end of the course.

The second CIS course, on Domination and Subordination, included a strong Marxist component, emphasized contemporary topics, and generated considerable controversy within the Cornell faculty and within CIS. This in turn led to a direct faculty challenge of CIS' right, and competence, to

offer undergraduate courses. Under these new political circumstances, there was a perceived need for a more comprehensive assessment of the program. Working with CIS, Stephen Brock negotiated support from the Institute for International Studies of the United States Office of Education. This proposal delineated six major evaluation tasks. Briefly, these were:

1. A comprehensive description of the two courses to be offered during the 1972-73 academic year;
2. An analysis of the anticipated impacts of these courses on students and faculty;
3. A similar analysis of unanticipated outcomes on students and faculty;
4. Identification of shared and dissimilar objectives between courses;
5. Identification of the models of interdisciplinarity used in these courses;
6. The development of evaluation guidelines for problem oriented, interdisciplinary courses in International Studies.

To design and administer this project, Brock recruited Whiton Paine, an evaluation specialist. The timing of grant approval, plus prior work commitments meant that major design work did not start until two weeks before the Fall course was scheduled to begin. Thus, severe time pressure was an important initial consideration. Other, unexpected considerations were that all members of the teaching team to be evaluated had not been informed in advance that their work would be monitored, and the individual primarily responsible for the course concluded that he had been inadequately consulted

by the CIS administration and also that the evaluation was a direct attack on his academic freedom. He acquiesced to only the most unobtrustive of evaluations.

Major differences between Paine and Brock also developed in two important areas. First, there was a lack of role clarity in terms of their areas of responsibility in the design and implementation of the evaluation project. This problem was complicated further because Brock, drawing upon his curricular, philosophical and interdisciplinary interests, and Paine, responding to the specifics of the O.E. evaluation proposal and his own training in experimental psychology, had very different, and somewhat incompatible perceptions about the goals and appropriate methodology of the evaluation. In short, a typical and stressful mess at the beginning of an assessment ef effort.

In this planning stage, David Macklin, a Social Psychologist was recruited to serve a variety of consulting roles. As a member of the CIUE evaluation group, he made a substantial contribution to the entire evaluation. In particular, he facilitated effective communication between Brock and Paine, served as an observer who was not directly affected by ideological and interpersonal differences, and was crucial in suggesting compromises throughout the project.

The result was a preliminary design which used a modified Context-Input-Process-Product (CIPP) model for a reasonably comprehensive evaluation of the separate courses on rural development and ethnicity. Pre-, midterm, and post-questionnaires, interviews with faculty, and observation of course activities during the semester were to be the main sources of data and multivariate procedures would be used to transform data into information for future program decisions. This design was applied in the assessment of

the rural development course but a severe enrollment decline between this course and the next one, led to a major reorganization of the evaluation effort.

The final design added follow-up questionnaires and faculty interviews for the earlier CIS courses, included an additional CIS course given this year, and stressed a more comprehensive consideration of the context of the program. This required a complete analysis of relevant material in the Center for International Studies files. Allison Brown, an Intellectual Historian was recruited for this task because of her specialized skills in this area and because of her unique previous experience with the program.

Thus four very different individuals collaborated on the evaluation of this interdisciplinary curriculum. Working together in ways which changed markedly over time, led to the identification of four main classes of impacts -- the disciplinary, the intellectual, the interpersonal, and the professional. As is true for most evaluators, each member of the team had a primary disciplinary allegiance as well as secondary, specialized disciplinary competencies. We also were committed to different intellectual values and styles. Both disciplinary skills and intellectual values were modified somewhat as we worked together as an interdisciplinary team evaluating an interdisciplinary curriculum.

Our interpersonal skills and needs also differed, and some of the impacts of our work are reflected in our present feelings for each other, our new levels of skills in this area, and in the forms of our present and expected future relationships. Finally, the evaluation made us master new professional skills and modify skills previously developed, as well as providing each of us

with a new insight into the evaluation enterprise and into the problems and rewards of other aspects of our professional roles.

These impacts were specific to this evaluation but they are seen as having a more general import. Every evaluation, to a greater or lesser degree, has disciplinary, intellectual, interpersonal, and professional impacts on evaluators. We offer this particular analysis not as an attempt to exhaustively delineate the characteristics of these classes of evaluation impacts but rather to encourage consideration within the evaluation community of this neglected area of the work we do. Each of us will briefly present in more detail these impacts and then the floor will be opened for a more general discussion of the problem which we are attempting to delineate.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

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I think two main generalizations can be drawn from our work on the task of specifying the impacts of the evaluation on ourselves. Each of us has, through this process, uncovered a rich store of learnings and other effects. The ones we saw as particularly striking were presented here today but there were many, more subtle disciplinary, intellectual, interpersonal, and professional impacts as well.

Also, at least for us, this process of self scrutiny has proven to be very valuable in stabilizing, in identifying and clarifying important lessons we learned from working together. Whether or not a similar search has been, or will be, useful to others we do not know, and having talked about ourselves, now we would like to hear from you about the issues raised in this symposium.